

# **Development of Marxist Economic Anthropology in the New Era: From Historical Materialism Perspectives**

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*The thought of historical materialism founded by Marx has great guiding significance and far-reaching influence on the development of economic anthropology. This paper discusses Marxist economic anthropology's ideological origin, development trend, schools, main viewpoints, and theoretical defects. It analyzes the enlightenment and guiding significance of Marxism on economic anthropology theory in terms of problem consciousness, research methods, and research objects, and combs out the research on some social development issues at the forefront of foreign economic anthropology theory, including the inequality of world development, the paradigm of "development" and unstable economy. Based on this, it makes a preliminary analysis of the development of Marxist economic anthropology from historical materialism perspectives in the new era.*

*Keywords: historical materialism, Marxism, economic anthropology, irregular economy, endogenous growth*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Economic anthropology has always accompanied human social production and economic development since modern times. From Marx's research, economic activities, social relations, and the different movements focused on his economic and anthropological research. His research focuses on the historical evolution of the human social form and economic system, its fundamental laws, and internal logic. Thus, he achieved a tremendous theoretical breakthrough, creating historical materialism. It provides a scientific worldview and methodology for studying economics and anthropology. It makes it possible for them to penetrate and merge into each other and finally move towards some form of unity and enables them to expand their research at a higher level and in a broader vision, continually rediscover themselves, and continuously upgrade themselves. It provides a solid theoretical basis and ample research space for developing Marxist economic anthropology in the new era.

Marxist economic theory system, including much economic anthropology, reflects the humanistic understanding of economic issues. Marx studied and meditated on Morgan's anthropology. He planned to improve his economic theory research by referring to the research results of anthropology, thus laying the initial theoretical foundation for the emergence and development of Marxist economic anthropology. Marx has been regarded as a supporter of partisan struggle and radical revolutionist in the mainstream of western society. However, his status as a great social scientist is still generally recognized, and his thoughts and theories can be applied without any partisan color. Therefore, the basic paradigm of Marxist historical materialism has a profound impact on the development of foreign economic anthropology (Markush 2011).

Marx absorbed the rational core of Hegel's Dialectics of systematisms and procedurally about the development, abandoning his idealistic view of harmony. He focused on exploring the internal contradictions and development process among the various parts of the human social system, thus creating a new concept of dialectical historical materialism, which examines the domestic relations and rational development of economic life, social activities, and cultural change. Throughout Marx's research, the study of economic anthropology has always played an essential role in his theoretical system. It is mainly scattered in his works of different periods and his reading notes in his later years, which primarily involve the following issues: the status of ancient social history, the origin and evolution of classes, the different stages of human social formation (Jun 2006).

## **THEORETICAL SOURCE OF MARXIST ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY**

Marx tried to expand Hegel's view that culture and state should serve all people harmoniously and reciprocally as a revolutionary theorist. Based on the study of Feuerbach's view of stressing tension and confrontation between individuals and groups, Marx focused on the way groups think and act. Marx borrowed from Hegel's view that history is moving forward and Feuerbach's method of dealing with the contradiction of the social system. Based on the dialectical synthesis and revolutionary transformation, Feuerbach created his new thinking (dialectical historical materialism) and applied it to studying human social and economic activities and historical development.

Hegel's Dialectics points out that the flow of history should be two opposing forces, confronting each other in a way that can lead to growth and perfection. A new phenomenon or viewpoint will appear with a complex formed by the reconciliation of the two, and the whole process will go on and on. This paradigm provides Marx with a historical theory and economic transformation that can be applied to cultural and social changes. Marx and Engels put forward in the Manifesto of the Communist Party that the decline of the bourgeoisie and the rise of the proletariat are inevitable and historically inevitable (Marx and Engels 1978). It points out the way forward for humankind's future development and provides a theoretical source for the development of Marxism economic anthropology.

Because Marx emphasized that the potential motive force of change was material and economic rather than subjective, his method was representatively called "dialectical materialism and historical materialism". According to Marx, substantial and economic factors are dominant, while other human activities, such as consciousness and culture, are subordinate. Carlyle, a contemporary historian of Marx, devoted himself to analyzing the influence of a few heroes on history (Carlyle 2011), which had a significant impact on the society of that time. Marx completed "German Ideology" (Marx 1961) and "Communist Manifesto", which stressed that the development of objective material factors would lead to social relations change and mass action, refuting Carlyle's "heroic view of history". He put forward the "mass view of history" that the people are the real heroes who make history. It has played a vital role in the development of social science theory.

In the history of social sciences, besides Hegel's dialectics and Feuerbach's materialism, the anthropological research results also significantly influenced the formation of Marxism. For example, American anthropologist Morgan and his works had a high impact on the anthropology of Marx and the former Soviet Union and the anthropology of the United States. In the early 19th century, Morgan lived upstate in New York. He developed a keen interest in studying the Iroquois Indians and began to study the theory of human cultural change. Morgan elaborated on the general process of social-cultural change. He proposed seven artistic types from lower barbarism to another extreme "civilization", presenting a developmental cultural perspective. Morgan argues that each extreme has its own culture and, more or less, shows its way of life. He concluded that both the material culture, the social relations in the economic system, and the mode of production were the product of social evolution (Morgen 2007).

The research results of the founders of Marxism on Morgan's theory are reflected in Engels's (1972) later work, *The Origin of Family, Private Ownership, and State-Based on Lewis Henry Morgan's Research*. This work supports Marx's historical materialism with abundant archival materials and makes Morgan an anthropologist who Marxists highly value. Therefore, in the eastern world, Morgan's thought is well-known

and has become the basis of the theory of Oriental anthropology. However, in western academic circles, Morgan has been criticized more. For example, Radcliffe-Brown (1952) accused Morgan of concluding based on various conjectures rather than facts. Until the late 1940s, this situation did not improve.

In the early 20th century, economic anthropologists regarded relatively isolated small societies as stable individuals in the western world, so they tended to study social structure models. Later, White (1943) made it clear that the level of energy per capita was of great significance for the evolution of the structure of human society. Since then, White has further developed and elaborated on this viewpoint in his two books, *Cultural Science* (White 1988) and *Evolution of Culture* (White 1959). In the 1990s, when White was trained as a young teaching assistant as an anthropologist, he read Morgan's work on the Iroquois and, during his travels to Russia and Georgia in 1929, came into direct contact with the literature of Marx and Engels in various ways, in particular, the theoretical part on the nature and development of civilization (Barnes 1960). These experiences inspired White to further link cultural change with economic factors and expand the research of Morgan and Marx. However, White humbly insists that he has only developed Morgan, Marx, and other early revolutionaries' theoretical content and does not acknowledge his "new" contribution to methodology.

One of the most basic viewpoints throughout White's works is that culture is a management mechanism of human beings themselves, which can guide and regulate human behavior and effectively control energy to serve human beings better. Therefore, the basic structure of the human social and cultural system is composed of a technical approach and its derived philosophical system (White 1959, 390-391). White's theory does reflect Marx's view of historical materialism to a great extent. Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* (Marx 1976), the summation of production relations forms the economic basis of society and as a political, legal, cultural, and other social consciousness of the superstructure erected on it. Therefore, this foundation and social awareness have dialectical unity. The mode of production in material life determines the economic basis and social, political, and spiritual process of the general characteristics. The social existence of people determines the presence of human consciousness.

White's *Cultural Science* sees culture as a mechanism for harnessing energy, proposing three distinct but interrelated elements: infrastructure, middle-level structures, and super-structures. "Infrastructure" includes aspects of producing vital economic energy in culture, such as production methods. White argues that infrastructure tends to be independent of other variables and starts to affect other lower-level variables in the long run. "Middle structure" refers to social relations, such as hierarchy, political arrangements. Middle-level structures can be seen as either dependent or independent variables of the infrastructure. Infrastructure and middle-level structures can influence components of superstructures, such as ideology and religion, and are therefore considered dependent variables (White 1988).

In contrast to White's theory of macroscopic change, many other anthropological researchers, such as Stewart, emphasize specific cultural cases and particular cultures, which are more concerned with a specific culture than the culture itself. When we pay attention to specific cultural issues, the analysis of the general law of culture is not so critical and may even cause some preconceived interference. He, therefore, used multilinear analysis primarily to study evolution and the mechanisms of cultural transformation, with particular emphasis on the equal and integrated role of multiple factors, including status, methods, and environment. Stewart believes that culture can be a large-scale change or a unique local minor adjustment. The primary feature of its research is its emphasis on technological development and environmental change as methodological prerequisites for exploring the geographical characteristics of behavioral patterns. He uses the category of "cultural core" to study the problems in the process of cultural transformation, including people's attitudes towards major economic events, the actions taken and the relationships established, and the activities of many people who are not directly related to economic production (Stewart 1984).

Others, such as Service and Sahlins, add to Stewart's and White's arguments. They emphasize two aspects of cultural evolution: culture can continuously adjust and create various new and old alternations through adaptability. The second one is that the development of the past and new alternates have promoted cultural progress, allowing higher cultural patterns to take the place of lower cultural practices and become the mainstream (Harding *et al.* 1987). Together with those of Stewart and White, their works are regarded

as the actual results of Marx and Morgan's human development thoughts re-injected into the mainstream theory of western anthropology. Of course, these achievements are also the crucial theoretical resources we should draw lessons from in developing Marxist economic anthropology today.

Since the 1960s, in social anthropology, Influenced by Marx's historical materialism, "cultural materialism" has exerted a lasting influence in this field. The masterpiece advocating this paradigm is *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* by Harris (1968). On the surface, it is an objective historical study of anthropological thoughts, but it confirms the scientific nature of Marxist analytical methods. Harris' system theory emphasizes that one change will inevitably lead to other changes in the whole system. Harris agreed with Marx that production and energy use profoundly impact cultural and social life. Harris regards society as a system of interrelated and interacting parts in the cultural and ecological environment, dramatically expanding the early Marxist economic anthropology model.

As a materialist, Harris (1980) believed that culture is a mechanism for meeting human needs and desires by collecting and producing essential goods, such as society's demand for energy. It also focuses on developing technologies needed by the environment, such as technology, work patterns, harvesting, and food production methods. Harris emphasized reproduction and population control because of his interest in energy demand and management. Therefore, there are two ways for human society to adapt to the environment: one is to produce energy/food, and the other is to control (or not control) society's demand for energy and food (adopting reproduction and population control strategies). Harris advocates combining energy/food collection and reproduction as an infrastructure, refining Leslie White's view.

Harris believes that society is a system that tends to be stable. Similar technologies are used in similar environments. It will produce the same production and reproduction with distribution and redistribution structure. Therefore, it will lead to the formation of related social groups. People will have a similar belief system and value orientation within these groups. Through constant cooperative game and trial and error correction to achieve a certain kind of labor cooperation and co-production, converge to a specific steady-state system. Suppose we study human beings' economic activities and cultural behavior. In that case, we should first pay attention to the material conditions on which human society's economic production and cultural life depend. That is to say, we should examine the internal determinant mechanism and functional mechanism of technology-environment-economy-culture, just as we should first investigate natural selection to study the production and reproduction sequence of different times. Harris accepted the Marxist concept and stressed that the intrinsic determinant causal chain of social life is the basic structure-middle structure-upper structure. To meet the needs of human society, the production and reproduction of material materials have the first importance logical pre-existence.

The grass-roots structure provides the foundation for the emergence and development of social, family, and political economies. In turn, the latter will lead people to form certain types of symbols, concepts, values, and rituals to consolidate inevitable political and economic domination and social and family status. Harris's view on the evolution of human society holds that the basic structure of materiality changes first, then the middle frame of the economy and the upper system of culture changes correspondingly and then changes again (Sun 2000). Social network and political relations include kinship, social class, civic organization, and war conflict. Ultimately, the superstructure is also composed of spiritual systems. For example, ideology and cognitive models, such as religion, art, music, dance, and sport, are also included in the superstructure. In general, culture is an infrastructure-influenced structure, and this model is a restatement of Marx's emphasis on the economic role in *German Ideology* (Marx 1961). Of course, cultural materialism benefited from the new development of anthropological research more than a century after Marx enriched and developed traditional anthropology to a certain extent, making it more scientific and rigorous, more specific and less specific. This theoretical direction can be seen as the concrete application of Marxism in economic anthropology.

Cultural materialism holds that the universal structure of the social and cultural system depends on the biological and psychological constants of human nature and the differences between thought and behavior, theme, and guest. Marx believed that culture is destined to develop in a specific direction, and the economic basis of society must have a significant impact on everything based on its development. Based on this idea, cultural materialists put forward analytical models and methods to predict cultural activities and

development trends. In short, infrastructure often affects secondary variables, i.e., the primary variable of the structure, which becomes the primary variable and, by its power, affects the superstructure that becomes the secondary variable. Western scholars believe that cultural materialism is a scientific and non-partisan means to explain how culture develops and why it grows. It is also a modified and perfected Marxism. Contemporary economic anthropologists are often very interested in this change because building a strong and successful organization requires understanding how needs and desires change over time and how cultures change from time to time. It, of course, should also become the focus of Marxist economic anthropology in the new era.

## **ESSENTIALS OF MARXIST ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY**

Economic anthropology emerged in western countries in the 1940s and 1950s. In its early stage of development, it mainly focused on the economic and social life of primitive people. Then came the debate on “form and reality” in the 1960s, and later the origin of neo-Marxist thought in the 1970s, driven by the left-wing belief. Its research field is increasingly diverse and extensive, including almost all positive and empirical studies on the human economic system and economic behavior, including cross-cutting and general topics such as marketing, gender positioning, and the informal economy.

Traditional economic anthropology mainly adopts fieldwork and ethnographic description, focusing on studying the closed, dispersed, and small-scale societies in the underdeveloped areas of a pre-industrial society (outside Europe and the United States). Therefore, this is an isolated and static fragmentation of economic anthropology research methods from the mainstream social science research perspective. Because of its lack of comprehensive and in-depth systematic analysis of the problem, it is difficult to grasp the fundamental law of human social development scientifically. More and more successful contemporary economic anthropologists have applied Marxist academic viewpoints to varying degrees in their studies of the underdeveloped regions (outside Europe and the United States) to overcome this severe limitation. They have tried to analyze the evolution of human socio-economic forms from dialectical materialism and development (Wang 1979).

The Marxist model discussed above examines group rather than individual responses and applies scientific rather than humanistic methods. Engels said Marx’s work was “scientific socialism”. This distinguishes it from the utopia of a better future, created by idealist William Morris. The latter had a more humanistic view in his early days. Marx explored humanistic or anthropological issues in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, such as human alienation or alienation. Many Western commentators believe that these works give us a closer look at Marx’s more authentic.

Marx believed that the rising industrial production system in the 19th century tightly controlled people’s needs and limits weakened the spirit of individuality and leading to more and more alienation or alienation of people’s relations. Marx studied how modern society alienates or alienates people from three aspects: labor force, creative behavior, and people themselves. For example, the factory environment reduces constraints on the structure of the workforce as strict management practices increasingly control workflow. This impersonal stipulation makes it difficult for blind duplication of work to bring about a sense of achievement for workers, thus making work a tiresome task and leaving them feeling less fulfilled or satisfied. Marx used the word “commercialization” to describe the inhumane act of obtaining the value of cash (the process of reducing the results of human labor). Although many workplaces have become more humane, Marx believes that potential inhumane factors are still. Thus, when people are forced to alienate themselves and others, they become inherently psychologically obscene or externally hostile and confrontational (Marx 1983).

The Frankfurt School has made full use of Marx’s theory of alienation or alienation, also known as critical theory, and started a Marxist-oriented movement to seek a broader, multi-disciplinary perspective. The critical approach combines Marxist theory with other disciplines to create a sounder model of the relationship between people and the economy. Over time, critical theory attracted more scholars, including literary critics, historians, and other humanists. Theodor Adorno, Erick Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and Lew Lowenthal are the representatives of this school.

In the 1960s, a French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, adopted Marxist thought as “the philosophy of our time”. This adaptation made existentialism and later intellectual movements, such as post-structuralism and deconstruction, more fully accept the Marxist thought on the origin of humanistic. In the 1970s, the trend of critical analysis developed in the United States and has had a far-reaching impact since then. Therefore, humanistic Marxism is a compelling force that differs from the scientific socialism discussed before. It also provides abundant resources for developing Marxist economic anthropology in the new era.

Marx’s economic theory breakthrough the classical economic approach mainly reflected in the criticism and analysis of capitalism. Marxist economic theory scientifically proves that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the contradiction between the capitalist private ownership of means of production and the socialized mass production of humankind, which is becoming an obstacle to the development of productive forces and the progress of humanity. While increasingly unable to control the socialized mass production of society, capitalism has also cultivated its grave-digger, the working class, which has developed with the development of the socialized mass production. The future development of humanity depends on the working class, for all other types of society (including the bourgeoisie, which still occupies the dominant position at present) decline with the development of the socialized productive forces, and only the working class develops with its progress. Therefore, through the leadership of the working class and with the help of its growing power to carry out social change, it will make human development a higher stage. Based on the analysis of the basic categories of classical political economy, such as commodity, labor, value, land, and capital, It also abstracts an objective system of capitalist society by fully drawing on the advanced theoretical achievements of Europe at that time (such as German classical philosophy and French utopian socialism). It scientifically explains the social contradictions and conflicts of ideas through this objective system (Wang 2005).

Although Marx advocated utopian socialism in his early days, from his critique of capitalist labor relations, he abstracted the concept of human alienation and labor alienation. However, in later studies, Marx emphasized that the primary factor of economic activities was the production of material materials and attributed capital appreciation to the accumulation of surplus value created by workers for capitalists in production and labor. In *Das Kapital*, Marx profoundly demonstrated that the valued entity of commodities is the abstract labor of socialization. Capital is when products develop to the point where even workers become commodities. It becomes capital by exploiting the surplus value created by the labor force. When the market allocates resources as the principal means by which social production and reproduction can proceed, the organic combination of the means of production controlled by capitalists and the employment of workers promotes excellent strides in the productive forces of human society (Ding 2011). Marx also analyzed the evolution of various socio-economic forms before capitalism from the viewpoint of historical materialism, tracing back to the prehistoric stage of human beings and benefiting greatly from the anthropological works of Morgan and others. In his later years, Marx did much anthropological research and left a lot of anthropological notes.

Through this cross-cutting study of economics and anthropology, Marx understood the essence of capitalist society and saw it as a dissolving agent for the past social formation of humankind, which would eventually be dissolved by the new one (Tian & Luo 2013). Marx also clarified that the dissolution of the former capitalist society and the severe alienation and fierce conflict of human existence caused by capitalism is implied in the new combination of wage labor and means of production under the control of capital (Wilk & Cliggett 1996, 30). However, from the perspective of the evolution of human history, capitalism makes us get rid of the backward state of pre-capitalism, which is natural dependence and personal dependence. Therefore, capitalism has promoted the development of human productivity and new socio-economic factors. Marx’s scientific division of the stages of social development and his profound grasp of the laws of economic activities has laid a scientific theoretical foundation for the development of today’s economic anthropology.

Class categories played a more critical role in studying Marx’s economics and anthropology and combining the two. Marx and Engels’ Manifesto of the Communist Party made it clear that the development of commodity economy makes commercial logic immerse in most social production. Before capitalism, the complex and diverse order, status, and class situation in human society gradually evolved and simplified

into the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and became the internal contradiction that determines the development of human society in the future. Of course, they also believe that under certain conditions, some classes left over from the old society will still have a more significant impact on the development of the new organization. Human society has always been a complicated and giant spiral evolution and growth system. We must not view the relationship between economic factors and human development simplistically and dogmatically. These thoughts provide a penetrating and unique perspective for the new development of economic anthropology. Also, Marx's theory on the contradictory movement between productive forces and production relations promotes human society's development. It provides a scientific and valuable tool for today's economic anthropology research. As such, the researchers in the face of today's complex and rapidly changing human society have a guide to explore the way forward without losing their direction.

The current human society's political, economic, and cultural activities have undergone many tremendous changes, some even qualitative leaps, compared with even the most recent one hundred years ago, which have brought globalization to a new level. For example, the information technology revolution's changes in production and lifestyle are astonishing and even unexpected. Almost inadvertently, with the help of these modern technologies and the development and deepening of almost pervasive network links, the global different nations, countries, and classes are tightly wrapped together and increasingly accelerated integration, forming a community of human destiny.

At this time, if the study of economic anthropology continues to adhere to the typical traditional object, only to do the microscopic investigation, it has been far from meeting the needs of the development of the new era. All nations, countries, and strata of the world are consciously or unconsciously stepping up efforts to break the state of isolation, isolation, and desertification and are eager to integrate into the economic, social, and ecological cycle of globalization. The form and degree of integration into this system, or the level of development of the community of human destiny, will inevitably become an essential factor in determining the majority of developing countries or nations to change their backward situation.

All these new changes and developments provide ample space for the development of modern economic anthropology. Therefore, the current economic anthropology research should adjust the methods and research objects or shift the center of gravity. More attention should be paid to the dynamic relationship from a great perspective to form a more comprehensive and profound understanding of human economic and social development. Marx's method of studying economic anthropology, which was criticized by some as too "grand narration", meets the absolute need to consider the development of human society and the economy in the new era of globalization. Many of the best economic anthropologists in the West is consciously or unconsciously applying or approaching using Marx's research paradigm. Based on the detailed and long-term studies of ethnography and fieldwork, this paper empirically examines the economic development of developing countries and the difficulties they face and produces several excellent treatises and some valuable research results (Wang 1979).

## **NEW TRENDS OF WESTERN ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY**

In the 1970s-1980s, with the development of applied anthropology, many anthropological researchers in the West worked in development institutions. Therefore, development issues, such as the economic problems of developing countries, especially in agricultural development, have become their focus of attention. The bitter lesson of the Vietnam War made some anthropological researchers feel puzzled as never before. They are vaguely aware that the knowledge of economics and anthropology may have been misapplied to the poor and helpless. And as such, the anti-poverty decisions taken by the government to help the inhabitants of backward areas often do not allow them to solve the problem of poverty but instead plunge them deeper into the vortex of poverty and even lead to destruction. Therefore, many anthropological researchers began to doubt the original development theory of economics and anthropology. They tried to carry out some new combinations to explore new methods and unique perspectives of economic anthropology. For this reason, they began to go to field research, the operation of specific projects and mechanisms, and how to cause the impact on people's daily life were in-depth study.

The rise of dependency theory has drawn the attention of many economic anthropologists. They explored how political relations lead to the paradox of anti-poverty development strategies and policies. The scholars discovered that although these strategies aim to help the poor, ultimately, they serve the rich. As such, the polarization between the rich and the poor is growing. For example, many aid projects under the banner of the Green Revolution, intended to increase local food production efficiency through eco-friendly means, have resulted in many poor farmers being forced out of their homes and into urban slums because they are unable to adapt to the changes (Luo & Tian 2013). As a result, rural poverty has not been addressed, but a new problem-urban-slum has begun to emerge. These paradoxes and contradictions in practice provide costly problems and issues for the development of economic anthropology in the modern era. The study on the relationship between poverty and development, an unstable economy and intellectual development, and sustainable development and new growth are worthy of our attention.

### **The Relationship Between Poverty and Development**

Western researchers generally insist on using the traditional formalist methodology of economic anthropology to study the relationship between poverty and development. They often tend to make such theoretical analysis and fact description: poverty is due to “irrational” and “illogical”, thus the causes of poverty are mainly attributed to the poor’s own behavioral bias. This concept is precisely the result of long-standing racial discrimination and cultural prejudice. Contrary to their belief, the poor have their reason and logic and can often use the minimal resources available to them in a more rational, efficient, prudent, and patient manner to create the wonders of the world. They focus on corruption, tax systems, policy equity, and government institutions. These issues can lead to severe problems in developing societies, such as large-scale migration, urban decadence, the underground (black market) economy, drug trafficking, the destruction of rainforests, and other economic, social, ecological, and cultural crises. In this respect, Clifford Geertz’s research is an outstanding representative, and similar research laid the foundation for economic anthropology’s “cultural turn”. The representative works are his three treatises: “Agricultural Involvement” adopts the traditional paradigm to study the economic model of Java and tries to find out the reasons for its underdevelopment; Hawker and the Prince learned the economic model of Java’s towns, He classifies it into two ideal models-“market type” and “company type”, The former represents the spontaneous and decentralized type of street economic activity of the majority, while the latter, in contrast, refers to a small but relatively centralized and large-scale enterprise protected by national law, which operates through market competition and economic calculations and seeks to avoid crises. To improve the competitive advantage, the “corporate” enterprises will explore the state authority to provide security for them so that their capital accumulation can be realized smoothly. The “market-type” population, on the other hand, is the activity of fragmented, competitive individualists whose capital accumulation is difficult to achieve on a larger scale and at a higher level because of their isolation, fragmentation, and vulnerability (Gertz 2014). Niagara focuses on the “market type”, which focuses on how individuals make rational choices in competitive markets and points out that the problems of the “market type” are inevitable under the conditions of state hegemony or state monopoly capital controlling economic operation (Gertz 1999).

When political reform has led to significant changes in social production, residents’ lives, and enterprise lines, many modern humanities have turned to individualism-oriented values and methodologies. In this context, economic anthropologists have begun to engage in the critical issue of the relationship between economic globalization and unequal development (Xu 2010). They tend to conclude that the more developed and more robust the State, the more likely it is that the social power of the State and the monopolies of capitalist enterprises will develop and grow. They will become subjects of the prerogatives of State monopolies (Shou 2017). With the “development” problem increasingly becoming the theme of our times, more and more economic anthropology researchers began to pay attention to the “development” problem.

However, some commentators criticized their findings as often not based on a careful study of economic growth and decline (Chen 2007). In the industrial revolution era, the mainstream theory generally believes that under capitalist conditions, “development” contains two interrelated meanings: the growth of access to

resources and the destruction of resources for further growth. The inherent contradiction paradox and the vicious circle of “development” is also the starting point for many economic anthropologists to criticize the capitalist system. Under this logic of “development”, people in developing countries and regions are faced with tragic experiences and massive costs. James Ferguson’s *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development”, Depolarization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* revealed a severe problem with development projects in Lesotho-economic action to lift local farmers out of poverty and into wealth-ended in a dramatic rise in the interests of urban dwellers (Ferguson 1990). His other book, *Prospects for Modernity*, examines the living conditions of the inhabitants of Zambia’s copper-producing areas and finds the same problems and paradoxes. His economic, anthropological research in the book also draws on some free trade schools, such as the Manchester school of thought, such as Egoodman (Ferguson 2007). Therefore, the whole idea has apparent characteristics of dualism, and many problems have not been thoroughly studied.

The study of poverty and development has promoted interdisciplinary cooperation and refined the academic division of labor in the spatial context. In the 1950s and 1960s, the dominant idea was that modernization meant making the world more productive, more diverse, and organically united. Therefore, “traditional” should be included and surpassed by “modern”. Capitalists, for example, combine technology and education, democracy, and the rule of law around the city through the vital factor of ownership and control of the capital. While this leads to increased inequality, the resulting “development” gains will compensate for those disadvantages and ultimately improve the living conditions of the majority of the population, making the increase in inequality seem acceptable. However, with the increasingly severe capitalist economic crisis in the 1970s and the general Marxist theory, researchers realized that such a “development” concept is highly harmful to the progress of human society. Such development eventually led the poor developing countries to become more and more dependent on the rich capitalist countries, passively integrated into the global capitalist system under their control, and in a low-end and peripheral position, unable to achieve their natural development. In this case, their product requires the withdrawal of the developed capitalist countries, changing the status of marginalized people and victims in their zero-sum game. However, once they leave the global capital system, their development will be hampered by the loss of external support. This classic dilemma corroborates the dilemma of “good farmers” mentioned in Foster’s book (Tian & Luo 2013).

Solving the contradiction between urban poverty and material progress has always been the focus of economic anthropologists. They are accustomed to using mathematical econometrics models to quantify “poverty” accurately and pay close attention to highly technical measurements and calculations. Although applying these mathematical tools is of considerable significance to the study, they will expose their vast limitations if the qualitative problems of the “grand narrative” are incorrect. In this regard, Wassily Leontief, the Nobel Prize winner in economics, pointed out that with extreme acuteness, the excessive fascination and indiscriminate abuse of mathematical modeling precisely expose the paucity of our research and lack of theoretic guidance (Leontiev 1991).

Grzegorz W. Kolodko (2014), the former Deputy Prime Minister of Poland, a senior economic adviser of the International Economic Research Institute and the European Union, is not convinced of the mathematical worship of mainstream economics. He once pointed out profoundly that many mainstream economists are too self-confident to believe that their mathematical models are the only ones that are correct and can dominate the world. In other words, they ignored the variability and complexity of human economic activities under different human-environment conditions. In these people’s places, economics has become “the empty field of human (category) study”, only seeing mathematical formulas but not human and culture. Economics and anthropology’s research scope and object are extraordinarily grand and sophisticated. The abstraction and fitting of mathematics are only desirable. In the future, the truly advanced scientific, economic research and its mathematical tools should be more concise, and the embedding of cultural background will be more in-depth. That is to say, economic research will include more and more anthropological content and more cultural analysis. It also provides an opportunity to develop Marxist Economic Anthropology in the new era.

## **Irregular Economy and Transcendental Development**

Davis (2006) describes cities in third world countries as “a star in a slum”. He wrote: “The streets are bustling with mixed crowds of vendors, beggars, thieves, crooks, porters, pimps, taxi drivers, and so on. Nevertheless, they have received little benefit from a real job ‘to sustain themselves’”. In Dickens’ works, there are many terms of the early modern street economy. Most discussed terms include “underground”, “regulation”, “hidden”, “black market”, “second economy”, and so on. If anthropologists have not kept much promise of development in their fierce criticism of bureaucracy and nationalism, they have at least contributed to the concept and scope of “irregular economy” (or “informal economy”) in the development studies. The most critical anthropological study before the Cultural Turn was Clifford Geertz’s four books on economic anthropology, the most representative of which, *Hawker and Prince*, addressed the dual nature of Indonesian entrepreneurs. He noted that most urban residents in Java, Indonesia, were engaged in economic activity in the “market-oriented” street economy (Geertz 1963). The main body of the “corporate” rule economy is mainly the modern joint-stock enterprises in the West, which are protected by national laws, calculate and evade risks and accumulate capital systematically according to the rules. It is defined by Weber et al. as the so-called “rational enterprise”. In contrast, the “market-oriented” economy is an individualistic and decentralized competition that makes it almost impossible to accumulate capital.

More disadvantageous is that the government only recognizes existing enterprises whose economic activities might be “irregular” or “informal”. Their capital accumulation is limited by both the starting point and the rules, making it almost impossible for them to succeed. As a result, the market model bounded to lose out to the corporate model, which, in the late nineteenth century, became the cornerstone of state capitalism by strengthening its monopoly position with the development of large-scale production and enterprise assembly lines (Weber 1997). It is the main reason why the polarization between the rich and the poor becomes more and more severe in the capitalist system. Some hereditary royal princes inherited factories and hired government mercenaries with little or no economic discipline. They let their workers work in any environment, no matter how profitable, and it is vital to maintain their followers. It is a pattern opposed to the ruling economy or rational enterprise of capitalism. Having completed his study of the highly irrational economic rules in urban slums in West Africa, Hart tried to convey his economic, anthropological experience to development economists (Hann & Hart 2011). Lewis transfers agricultural labor to urban markets in his binary model of development economists, which significantly impacts formal and informal nouns. The traditional and informal economies are linked because simple ideas work along conventional lines for the organization of society in terms of inheritance systems.

At the policy-making level on “development”, the panic caused by “the third world urban unemployment” is the primary manifestation of the global economic crisis in the 1970s. The habitual thinking of governments and businesses is to pay particular attention to so-called “formal employment”. In the economic concepts of Marx and Keynes, the crucial role of the state in economic development and growth is also emphasized. However, today’s perplexing question is: how do “we” or bureaucrats and consultants provide housing, health, employment? Moreover, what are the people who need them or call them “them”? If “what” did not happen — such as the reappearance of urban riots or the specter of revolution — would the Great Depression scenario of mass unrest among at-risk populations caused by “unemployment” not have happened? The whole story and a series of questions are different from Hart’s more than two years of experience in the Accra slum. He wants to persuade development economists to abandon the systematic thinking of the “unemployment” model and ideas and study more grass-roots economies. He did not have much theoretical ambition but merely sought to inject irregular economic activity into the ongoing debate on industrialization’s problems and establish a specific ethnographic disciplinary perspective. According to some highly underdeveloped regions and countries (e.g., Kenya), the “informal sector” has become an exceptionally frequently used keyword in their international labor sector, which can help consultants and bureaucrats to make decisions (Bangasser 2008).

It can be argued that the idea of an “irregular economy” has dual connotations, reflecting both the development of bureaucracy (the international labor sector) and the development of the “people” in the

ethnographic sense. Under the influence of neoliberalism, the distinction between “formal” and “informal” in the world economy and the national economy has become more and more blurred. Liberalization of public functions has not reduced corruption but only made it more pervasive or semi-public. The illicit arms and drug-smuggling industries appear to have exploded. The struggle for “intellectual property rights” has become a new global war. Assuming that the central and local governments are the profit drivers of the whole country, profits can always get into the law's loopholes, dig up the corners of the law, and make the law finally become the guardian god and umbrella of profits. The informal economy will sooner or later take over the commanding heights of bureaucracy and State power in an atmosphere of market fanaticism. Typically, most African countries (70-90 percent) have recognized the legitimacy of the “irregular economy”, which allows for the illegal integration of capitalist forms into the original economic system and their infiltration into one another. Africa as a whole seems to have become a vast “market-oriented” economy, a paradise for adventurers whose wealth can be squeezed by foreign monopolies. It is, in fact, one of the significant reasons why Africa is mired in poverty. Guha-Khasnabis believes that an “irregular economy” has a long history as one of the results of globalization promoted by neoliberalism. From a traditional point of view, we may discriminate against “irregular economy” activities, but it is not surprising that we seem to get used to it over time. However, suppose we have a sincere desire to improve the living standards of weak areas, then, in reality. In that case, we still have to try to use the power of government to coordinate and guide the development of self-organization (Hann & Hart 2011:116).

The globalization of the decade before World War I was marked by large-scale migration of European populations to temperate regions and massive migration of Asian “coolies” to tropical areas. The current globalization is characterized by many poor people from developing countries migrating to developed countries and regions in the West. Monopolistic Western capital manipulated the world economy in the era of industrial civilization. It helped wealthy families stand out from the cheap labor of the colonies, but the proportion was unfortunately still low. Now, Brazil offers the most affordable agricultural products, China the most affordable manufactured goods, India the most inexpensive information services, Russia the best value for money for better-educated immigrants, and so on. With the influx of large-scale immigrants from developing countries, the domestic workers in the western developed countries face unprecedented fierce competition, which is also a new problem and challenge for the neoliberal economic policy of globalization. The degree of globalization of capital is so rapid and profound that production, consumption, exchange, distribution, and accumulation seem to have spread into the global capital cycle. For example, Asia has long been on the verge of becoming integrated into its recent decades. However, non-physical barriers, such as racial, religious, and cultural barriers, remain high and, instead of narrowing, widen the income gap, which has become a universal phenomenon of this real globalization of capital, replicating and developing on all scales and at all levels (Hann & Hart 2011:118).

### **Sustainable Development and New Growth Theory**

With the increasingly severe crisis of the social economy, society, ecology, and culture, people have to start reflecting on the current social and organizational principles in-depth to re-conceive a more reasonable model. Economic anthropologists are duty-bound to do so. They will study how weak areas can organize themselves to narrow the gap with affluent regions in the face of growing global inequality and how society can create more tangible wealth and significantly increase its total in the name of development. More and more countries worldwide have begun to pay attention to protecting the ecological environment in the development process and put forward the “sustainable development” strategy after another. The premise of this strategy is that poor people can no longer imitate the rich people’s way of production and life, which will inevitably lead to the Earth’s environmental resources being unsustainable. Therefore, humanity must find an innovative model that allows for win-win outcomes between the poor, the rich, and the environment. To achieve the coupling between economic development and population limitation, some countries in the West and Asia are once again interested in the theory of “limited growth”. This theory was first proposed by Meadows et al. (2006). In the 1970s, the rich elite had long feared that the unlimited expansion of the poor would affect their standard of living and even threaten their personal and property security.

Nevertheless, the harsh reality is that poverty does now reach a high proportion of the world's population, and there is no prospect of a significant reduction shortly.

Endogenous growth theory, or new growth theory, assumes a causal relationship between openness and economic growth. However, it acknowledges that the causes of economic growth are complex and determined by the accumulation of human capital. The new growth theory focuses on the economic growth caused by technology investment. Therefore, the new growth theory regards technology as an endogenous variable compared with the neoclassical economic model. R&D activities, whether carried out by the private or public sector, are believed to increase the stock of technology in the economy, some of which may promote innovation and technological progress and increase profits. Therefore, R&D supports economic growth by influencing total factor productivity, and new technologies make production more efficient under the given conditions of capital and labor.

New growth theory emphasizes the importance of R&D activities and innovative human capital. The increase in the stock of human capital is conducive to innovation and the integration of knowledge developed in other areas. Therefore, the theory suggests that the long-term development of the economy is related to an increase in the number of people devoted to R&D, as it has a positive impact on the growth of creativity. Increasing returns to scale will reduce the cost of innovation due to advances in human knowledge (Pan & Shi 2001). In a word, the increase in human capital will promote technological innovation, encouraging economic growth in the long run.

With the increasing importance of openness, the new growth theory recognizes the importance of domestic institutions. There is a close relationship between intellectual property protection and economic growth in an open economy by building an environment conducive to technological innovation and knowledge accumulation. Another argument about intellectual property comes from its static and dynamic effects. Generally speaking, in a fixed environment, intellectual property is not welfare maximization because rational entrepreneurs become legal monopolists after a round of innovation. However, once a change occurs, spillover effects can spread to other sectors of the economy. R&D activities require many sunk costs, such as establishing high-level human capital, so temporary monopolies are needed. If a broad intellectual property regime protects new inventions, the incentive to continue to innovate will be higher.

In a dynamic environment, patent protection is justified because market participants engage in risky activities that promote technological progress and spread to other sectors, beneficial to social development (Dunning & Narula 2003). Globally, the protection of intellectual property rights also has asymmetric effects: the adequate protection of intellectual property rights may not maximize the welfare of each country. Net importers of intellectual property may have to pay more royalties. Therefore, the establishment of domestic intellectual property regimes may not by themselves guarantee economic growth. On the one hand, developed countries advocate that intellectual property rights need to be protected without discrimination, so that market forces are sufficient to promote technological innovation. On the other hand, developing countries believe that non-discriminatory intellectual property protection can hinder their R&D. They suspect that private TNCs will transfer the latest technology and support domestic learning.

At present, the intellectual property protection of developing countries must have their innovation and characteristics based on learning from the experience of developed countries. At the same time, it is also necessary to maintain good intellectual property cooperation with most countries globally, based on mutual benefit and win-win results, regarding enhancing the ability of independent innovation as their core goal. We must build an excellent exchange platform to translate change into fundamental productive forces faster and better, thus forming a virtuous circle to accelerate development (Wang & Zhou 2015).

Under the assumptions of the new growth theory, less exposure to external R&D due to unreasonable mechanisms is usually associated with lower productivity growth rates (Schiff & Wang 2006). Since cross-border externalities and knowledge spillovers were inevitable, the global economic integration of developing countries would contribute to their economic growth. Diao, Roe, and Yeldan (1999) argue that the impact of trade openness on the absorption of foreign R&D. If a country can effectively use alien technology, the benefit will be significant. Lederman and Maloney (2003) tested the R&D investment and development model, verifying that while R&D investment returns are higher in developing countries, other institutional variables should be factored into R&D investment decisions. Although developed countries

have a lower return on investment, the evidence suggests that they have more investment in R&D. This indicates that countries with national innovation mechanisms can better integrate into the world economy.

## CONCLUSIONS

From Karl Marx to Lewis Henry Morgan, and then to modern cultural materialist anthropology, the whole process provides relevant tools for studying the interaction between economic and technological models and culture, social system, and ideology. However, many scholars who study Marx's theory only pay attention to single-line development, such as the general trend of Leslie White's research in cultural and economic history. At the same time, other multi-line models admit that different cultures have different ways of development. These variants of Marxist sociological theory are essential because they provide solid models for predicting topics of interest to economic anthropologists: how changes in economic power trigger corresponding behavioral changes and how they are counterproductive to economic development. These models are all the more important from a systems theory perspective (according to Harris). Marxist economic theory provides efficient guidance when economic anthropologists analyze future trends and study the reactions of specific groups in the market, in production, and even in daily life.

Scholars redefined "development" and "the world and economy" with practice development in different periods. After the Second World War, with the widespread application of emerging technologies in industrial production and the rapid economic development driven by post-war reconstruction, the polarization between the rich and the poor has developed. The problem of imbalanced global expansion has become quite dangerous. Researchers of economic anthropology who study development issues have always paid close attention to world inequality and development imbalance. Hence, they applied anthropological fieldwork methods to study these problems and made significant contributions to discovering and solving them. They found that the "irregular economy" was, in many cases, a natural and necessary complement to the "regular economy". This kind of "irregular economy", which embodies the fierce competition among individuals, can be accepted by the government and integrated into the local "regular economy" after it survives the test of various harsh conditions and promotes its evolution. It can be said that the researchers of economic anthropology have made little contribution to the refinement and promotion of new ideas of social and economic growth, such as sustainable development and intellectual development. Sustainable development is still the theme of the times, and both developed and developing countries should make efforts to this end. In the open economic environment, endogenous growth theory is still the theoretical basis of economic growth; innovation, R&D activities, and intellectual property protection are the focus of attention.

In a word, Marxist anthropology can connect Darwin's theory of biological evolution with the view of human development and make Marx's historical materialism perfect and develop, while Marxist economic anthropology is to provide an in-depth, accurate, and concrete theoretical basis for it. On the other hand, Marxist economic anthropology is also the product of the continuous development and mutual penetration of economics and anthropology. It takes the economic logic of human behavior as the object of study to expand the study of economics to the field of anthropology, and to make the study of anthropology accurate to the level of economics, thus making the development of both economics and anthropology step into a new stage and a new realm. Traditional western economic anthropology mainly studies the economic logic of human behavior based on the history of western knowledge and standard methodology. There is no doubt that its limitations are immense. Its research results are often excessively microscopic and atypical by social scientists in other fields, significantly reducing its theory and practice value. Under the guidance of Marxism, researchers in the new era must examine human behavior and its economic logic with a broader perspective and more scientific methods to find more truth about the development of human society. Specifically, economic anthropology requires not only cross-disciplinary research

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